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AUTHOR Walshok, Mary Lindenstein
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ABSTRACT

A two-year longitudinal study of 200 working women in California urban areas represents an effort to understand the processes by which specific interests and commitments to paid employment develop. Data from intensive personal interviews with women in traditional and nontraditional occupations should indicate factors which facilitate the entry of women into nontraditional blue collar and working class jobs. Attention is given to the question of the general meaning of paid employment in the lives of all working women and how these women relate employment to other roles. Responses thus far from working women, both married and unmarried, have revealed a "cluster of motives or values" as to the significance of paid employment. They include (1) economic concerns, (2) desire to "get out and do something," (3) desire for outside communication and friendship, (4) desire for challenge and satisfaction, and (5) need for achievement and recognition. Among these women, family life and paid employment are the primary realms since their world is very circumscribed. Low income and working class women living in urban society are finding, however, decreasing satisfaction in traditional homemaking roles. (YLB)

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THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF PAID EMPLOYMENT TO WOMEN IN WORKING CLASS JOBS*

Mary Lindenstein Walshok
University of California Extension, San Diego

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The world of the working class woman is regrettably under-researched and misunderstood. The content and form of her daily experience, the hopes, dreams and meanings she attaches to her experience, the relationship of marital, employment and community roles are all issues about which we social scientists know very little. Moreover, what we think we know is all too often stereotypic or patronizing because of preconceived notions steming from particular ideologies, be they Marxist or bourgeois; or because of generalizations derived from a tradition of empirical research on the working class which has focused exclusively on the working class male and in particular his employment.

Pam Roby (1975) has pointed out the extent to which research on women in blue-collar, industrial and service jobs was a phenomenon of the early 1900's in this country. At this time, there was a great deal of interest in the conditions and consequences of these sorts of jobs for women, motivated generally by the reformist spirit that characterized the United States at the turn of the century. However, Roby points out that with the advent of World War I and the general decline of urban social reform, the concern with blue collar working women virtually disappeared.

Until very recently, with but a few notable exceptions (Komarovsky 1962, Rainwater 1959), the research on work, blue collar workers, industrial relations and management has been almost exclusively directed at the career patterns, work values and organizational climate experienced by men. Despite the fact that approximately 50% of women

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classified as working class in this society work full time and despite the fact that 40% of full time working women today are in working class jobs, they are virtually absent from the research and thinking about workers and the meaning of work in people's lives. While recent activities of union groups and women's groups, and recent funding for research on working class women may begin to change that picture, the present student of occupations, industrial relations, social class and organizations is confronted with research generalizations, theoretical frameworks and ideological positions which take into account the experience of only about half of the population employed in working class jobs. The absence of women from this literature is truly problematic for as our research and other research is beginning to demonstrate, the female experience of work has many distinctive characteristics which need to be taken into account in any formulation of the human experience of work.

An additional preliminary comment regarding the problematic nature of excluding the female experience from research is necessary. Our concern is not simply that women have been excluded from research, but that when they are included or referred to it is most often in terms of generalizations extrapolated from samples of white middle class respondents or studies of professional women. As a consequence, the female experience in American society either; (1) continues to appear one-dimensional with the domestic role defined as primary and concerns related to paid employment seen as contingent; or (2) concerns of working women are defined in class-biased terms with the work roles, career development and commitments of blue collar women not taken as seriously as those of professional women. The possibility that women

may experience marital, work and community roles differently depending upon their socio/economic condition and personal history is one which is only beginning to enter much of the literature on women. A clear appreciation of the motives, needs and meanings women attach to their experience is sadly lacking and their essential complexity and multi-dimensionality as a group is lost in easy generalizations about women derived from essentially sexist and class biased assumptions about the nature and meanings of work.

THE CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The research we are undertaking is an effort to capture some of this complexity and diversity and our findings thus far suggest that the experience and aspirations of women in working class jobs are substantially different from those of not only working class men, but of women in middle level and professional occupations as well. The definitions they give to their own situations and the ways in which they relate employment roles with other roles is somewhat different than is popularly believed. The research in progress is a two-year longitudinal study of 200 working women in California. We are conducting intensive personal interviews with women in both traditional (i.e., cosmetology, small parts assembly) and non-traditional (i.e., welding, auto mechanics) occupations in an effort to understand the processes by which specific interests and commitments to paid employment develop. We are interested, in particular, in the factors which facilitate the entry of women into nontraditional blue collar and working class jobs. Equal attention is being given to the question of the general meaning of paid employment in the lives of all the working women and how these women relate employment with other roles. Using

in-depth interviews, we have been able to get at the women's frame of reference and the definitions they give to their situations. Utilizing a leading question technique and a tape recorder, we are capturing a richness and complexity that is frankly startling. Our sample is drawn from particular industry sponsored on-the-job training programs and well established vocational education programs in three major California cities. The ideas under discussion in this paper are preliminary statements based on our first 100 interviews out of which somewhat more than half are women pursuing nontraditional training or work.

The data currently being collected appear to support the thesis that the experience of women in working class jobs whether in traditionally female or male fields has a number of hitherto unnoticed distinctive qualities. The particular area of experience with which we shall deal in this paper are the perceived benefits of paid employment. We will focus on the generalized meanings and significance women in working class jobs attach to their paid employment for, as we believe our initial findings suggest, the "meaning" of work in these women's lives is quite distinctive and, understandable in light of the historical condition of lower income and working class women in America.

Our research suggests that many women in working class situations do not as popular stereotypes would have us believe, aspire to the comfortable status of middle class homemakers. Rather they see the realization of many of their personal hopes and needs in meaningful paid employment. This is a consequence of a variety of factors related to the social condition of women in general and lower income and working class women in particular.

For one thing, employment options have been severely restrictive even among well educated women. The general restriction of most working women to routine, low paying jobs has been documented in a variety of important recent studies (Oppenheimer 1970; Madden 1972). Some women who have had the good fortune to be educated and affluent have managed, in small numbers, to break into some of the more rewarding "elite" professions (Bernard 1966; Astin 1969; Epstein 1970). However, large numbers of working women still find themselves consigned either to secretarial and clerical positions even if they have a great deal of higher education or to other routine low paying "female" vocational fields such as cosmetology or the myriad of assembly line and service occupations open to women with no college education or vocational training. Training and employment in the skilled trades and crafts has been even more closed to women than has entry into the elite professions. Today, for example, out of 138,000 apprentices in the state of California, only 231 are women.

Especially severe employment discrimination is only one side of the picture, however. Beyond these general constraints working class and low income women also do not participate in the elaboration of homemaking, child rearing, and consumption activities characteristic of middle class women. Although many of us believe that America has become one homogeneous consumer oriented society, the women we are researching do not appear to have discretionary time and money necessary for the management of an elaborate housewife role which includes home decorating, gourmet cooking, music lessons for the children and high levels of consumption. In addition, they do not participate in a social world

of high community involvement, volunteerism, book clubs and social gatherings beyond the family. And this is perhaps one of the reasons why, as we shall show momentarily, many of the women in working class jobs are more positive and less conflicted about paid employment than are many middle class and professional women. In addition to the very real economic motivation to seek paid employment, work and particularly, work in many nontraditional fields, provides working class and low income women with a challenge, a sense of satisfaction and personal growth that neither their previous routine paid employment nor their homemaking roles have given them.

One of the hypotheses suggested by our data is that many of the needs satisfied by the more elaborated "housewifely" duties and involvements of middle class women find expression and gratification for working class women through paid employment and particularly employment in some of the traditionally male dominated fields which are just beginning to open up for women. The "quality of life" concerns and embellishments characteristic of a middle class life style seem to be articulated and embellished for many working class women "within" the world of work. Work for many of these women in addition to being an instrumental means to an economic end is also an expressive experience in and of itself. This is probably for very specific historic and socioeconomic reasons which will be discussed in a moment. However, first it is important to describe in the language of the respondents themselves the significance of paid employment in their lives.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PAID EMPLOYMENT TO WOMEN IN WORKING CLASS JOBS: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

As part of her study of blue collar marriages in the late 1950's Mirra Komarovsky talked with a small number of blue collar working wives and found very much what we are finding fifteen years later. "The economic motive for taking a job is universally acknowledged, but it turns out to be not one but a cluster of motives. The women work, of course, because they desire what money can buy--but the sheer pride of earning is it self another reward." (Komarovsky, pp. 68, 1967) In a later passage Komarovsky expands on this observation. "Apart from money, the working wives mentioned other rewards of working; the enjoyment of social life on the job, the pleasures of workmanship, the bracing effect of having to get dressed up in the morning, some relief from constant association with young children, and 'having something interesting to tell my husband.' A job apparently need not be a highly skilled one to yield the worker some satisfaction from its execution." Our considerably larger sample of working women, both married and unmarried is revealing a similar "cluster of motives."

ECONOMIC CONCERNS

In response to a variety of open ended questions tapping values related to work including such questions as "What are the pluses and minuses of working?" "What sorts of things are important to you in a job?" and "What got you into this job in the first place?"; the women almost universally respond initially with statements about money; a good wage or salary, an opportunity to earn more money, an opportunity to advance to a job where one can earn more money, a job where "I'm paid

what I'm worth." One woman, a groundskeeper stated it this way:

> Good money. In fact that's a big plus factor. When I get really discouraged, I think where else am I gonna make this kind of money. Because even though it's not a skilled job and essentially I'm outside being a janitor, I'm getting $3.89 an hour.
>
> That's very good. I look in the papers and what do they offer? $2.50 and I've worked sometimes at what I consider a skilled job--well receptionist or secretary and they start off at $2.50. And I started at $3.89 right off. That's not fair, but that's because it's a man's job, too.

In contrast to data drawn from college students and other studies of occupational values (Rosenberg 1957; Davis 1964), these women do not emphasize opportunities for such things as serving others over a desire to make good money. And this is not surprising since half of the women we have interviewed thus far are single or divorced heads of households. Nearly half are minority women who have either gradually moved from menial to skilled labor over time, or are women who are suffering, along with their husbands, the especially irregular employment of minority workers in periods of high unemployment such as we are facing today. However, having described the very clear cut economic motives of these women workers is only to have brushed the surface. The virtue of our open ended interviewing technique is that we have learned a great deal about the work histories and values of these women which combine with economic need in various and interesting ways.

Our impression is that these women think about money in complex ways. They see it as not simply increasing their purchasing power, but as allowing them to be independent; independent from men in particular. Most of these women have been working since age twelve or thirteen, many of them have been "dumped on" by men and most have virtually always

had to take care of themselves. Earning good money, therefore, contributes to their feelings of being "in control";of being less vulnerable; and this is important even to those women who are married to men with secure incomes. The feelings of a number of the women are summarized in the following statement:

> Well, the pluses are I've never been good for asking my husband for anything. I don't want to have to ask anybody for anything. And I don't have to say 'Well, honey can I have this or can I spend that.' It gives me more money, even though what I'm making now isn't that much more. I feel alot more independent.

The women also express good feelings about having work where if you work harder you get paid more. Many of them have done factory work and housekeeping where the incentives to work harder are minimal. They like the idea of direct economic returns for hard work and see that as central to their interests in nontraditional jobs in particular.

> The good things is that the harder you work, the more money you make. The faster you work, the better you are. So if you want to lays off one day you can, and it's cool, because you can make up the next day by workin' hard. Now you can't do that on every job.

DESIRE TO "GET OUT AND DO SOMETHING"

A prevailing sentiment among most of the women is that employment is desirable because it gets them out of the house and doing something. One woman talked at length about how she "let's herself go" unless she has some kind of job.

> Well, obviously the first plus is having money of your own, which makes a hell of a difference and just being occupied. I said before I was lazy and I am in a sense that if I sit home and I have nothing but the housework, it just seems like my day gets longer and longer and I do less and less and less and I escape more. I watch television, or read. I also drink more. I like to drink in corrals any way, but I've never considered

> it a problem, because it's never been a problem. But if I sit home a great deal or if I'm very unsatisfactory in my employment like for instance--maid work, which I've had to try, I drink more because I'm bored. And I get insomina and all kinds of jazz like that. Which I don't do when I'm working at something I enjoy working at because I'm satisfied. I'm doing something and I feel good about myself and you can't be bored then. And your busy and you have to use your time more efficiently. It's a good thing,the more I'm doing, the more I do. That's a plus too, it's kind of a strange or tenuous plus but if is a plus because it seems to work for me very well. I don't know about other people but it does for me and a . . . I really can't think of any minuses as far as being employed.

This need to "do something" is echoed in the comments of another woman who doesn't like being "dependent" on anyone.

> I'm a very independent person so it has--that's my income you know, and I lose my dependence on other people and I don't like you know, being around the house, you know, I'd rather be out doing something constructive, something that I can account for all my time and a . . a. . . you know, I just enjoy it, I really enjoy it, I get satisfaction out of seeing something accomplished. What I dislike is that a . . . I can't be the you know, the type of wife who stays home and takes care of her children, things like that. I think I would never give up my job to do that, I kind of feel bad about it, but you know, sometimes there's things that you'd like to do at home, but I came right down to it and I wouldn't give up my job for it, and I feel insecure without a job.

Many of these women, when they aren't employed, have only their housework to occupy their time and many state being at home either bores them or drives them crazy.

> Well, the pluses for me is I have to support myself. The money's good where I'm working. I'm making almost $6.00 an hour after the raise. Um . . I have to get out of the house because I just get stir crazy after about 12 hours. That's me. Then I just feel like I'm wasting time if I'm not doing something. It keeps you aware of things, I think, too, getting out every day. I'm the only girl and I work with about 200 men--that keeps you on your toes.

In fact, one black woman whose economic situation is continually in flux stated it this way:

> There's been times when I've just needed to get out of the house you know. I just couldn't take the house another minute and I would go to work for a while and then on the other hand there were times when it was absolutely mandatory that I get out and you know to earn money. And . . . so I've worked under both circumstances.

DESIRE FOR OUTSIDE COMMUNICATION AND FRIENDSHIP

> I enjoyed it because you have communication to adults. You get to talk to people instead of home -- you -- all your problems you keep to yourself and you see four walls and you do the same things, wash, clean, do the dishes, cook and I think women should go out and work when there's no children at home and they're all in school. I enjoy going to school too.

The theme of wanting to get out of the house expresses itself in a variety of comments such as this one expressing the desire for contact and communication with other adults. Another woman stated it this way:

> I do like it because of the people and I get along with most everybody and have a good time, you know, it's pretty lax type of atmosphere and I don't go out very often or do anything socially too often, so here is where I get contact with people -- adults that I can talk to, other than my kid. So that would be the first thing, the contact with other people.

Finally being out of the house and in an employment situation makes many of these women feel like they're getting out of a rut.

> The pluses--I enjoy being around alot of people and being busy and doing things. It builds my ego to do something good and I feel really secure at work, like I'm doing something that's appreciated. At home I feel, why do my ironing, it's dirty the next day and you clean house and it's dusty the next day. It doesn't really show up so much, so I get alot more pride out of work and it's somewhere to go every day. To me a home life is more of a rut, just a thing that has to be done and going to work--it's hard to get up at 5:00 every morning and leave at 6 every morning, but it's worth it. I really enjoy it. I'm always happy at work and when I'm at home I'm always worrying about the kids or the problems, the money, you know, there's so many things to worry about but when I'm at home--but when I'm at work, none of these things are on my mind. I think about the job so I'd much rather--that's all the pluses, the minuses, too.

The need for sociability and involvement among middle class women is frequently satisfied through their more elaborate community and household involvements. But for large numbers of women the enjoyment of interpersonal contact and variety provided by paid employment should not be minimized. For women who are limited to household tasks and contact with immediate family members even a tiresome low paying job can be attractive. (The pattern of suburban living suggests that more and more middle class women are becoming isolated and the emptiness of many household rituals may be propelling these more affluent women into the paid labor force as well.)

DESIRE FOR CHALLENGE AND SATISFACTION

A. Learning New Things

An overview of the responses to questions about the importance of paid employment suggests it is less the negative aspects of parenting and housework that motivate these women than the fact that for them paid employment is a primary avenue to self fulfillment and growth. This appears to be particularly true for the women who are breaking out of routine work like small parts assembly and into training in a skilled trade.

> I don't like feeling cramped. I don't like feeling pinned in. I don't like not being able to discuss something with someone, where when you're in a house you can't. So with a job, I have the contact of most of the time my peers, or someone, alot of times intelligent people. There's still some there that don't belong there even and I don't know where they do belong so I enjoy that, I enjoy the money. I enjoy the idea that -- that there is something special I can do. I never found a manual type job that I can't do. I'm extremely good with dexterity type jobs. The plus of the job where I am is that I . . . I have something that I can do.

This expression of pride at being able to do something well occurs again and again.

> The good is being outdoors all day and learning the skill -- sprinkler repair is a skill that a person learns, like um . . .

any other skill, and the bad part is that it doesn't pay enough money.

The only thing I could do is apply with someone who pays more money doing the same thing I'm doing now, because I really enjoy doing what I'm doing and I'm good at it.

A woman in appliance repair stated she got into that field after trying many other less satisfying jobs.

Right now I really want to get into something that was interesting to me. Waitressing is not in a way bad, but it is dull, you know, it's the same old stuff, plus it was very physically wearing and this is why I decided I wanted training in appliance repair, I had been thinking about some kind of trade I could get in, and this seemed like it was the most interesting. I enjoyed the training--there's enough to fixing machines so that it's a something to work at, you know, it's just not something you automatically do, you think it over and figure it out and this is the kind of work I want to get into because I think I'll enjoy it more, than just more routine, routine--put it into a slot and turn it over and stamp it -- that sort of a . . . thing.

It's not just the challenge of the job itself. For many of the women a nontraditional job changes what they enjoy off the job as well. A woman working at an air rework facility has discovered a whole new world of interests.

The good things about working at this job is that I'm really learning alot, like I said, every week I change what I'm doing and if I don't learn it well, they keep me there an additional week. They make sure that we know what we're doing and I really enjoy that because I feel like I'm accomplishing something, whereas before where I was working it was routine and you could not see anything from it, you know, you were helping somebody else, but you weren't helping yourself. With the training program, you really feel like you're learning something so you're helping yourself, you feel good about it.

With the job itself, the parts that we're doing, they go in the airplane and I've really been getting into airplanes and old movies and go to library and look at the books there. I've really taken notice of this type of thing alot more so that's good, too, because I never really had a special interest that I really got into like I am with that.

B. Using Your Body

The physicality of much nontraditional work and the challenge that provides is another dimension mentioned by many of the women. They like to "be in shape" and much of this work contributes to better physical fitness.

> I found what I really liked when I was working in the shop was that my body felt better, I was getting exercise and I need exercise really bad because I'm so out of shape and that was really important to me that my job wasn't a sit down job, I liked that. It got hard at times, you know, where your body was pooped out, but then it feels good because you felt like you had exercise so you had more energy in the long run. And doing something with your hands was kind of cool, because you could see what you were doing. Actually see the results--when you fixed a car it ran--the immediate satisfaction, and that's something I never have had in a job. In a factory you don't see where it's going or anything, so that's cool, plus you know that you did it. It's like solving a puzzle--when you get the answer yay!

Another woman stated directly that she likes "hard" work.

> Well, just that it's different. You don't find too many women that do shipfitting. And I thought--I'm always a hard worker, I don't like to brag, but I like to work hard. If I make up my mind, I know I could do it. And I wanted to do this because I figure it's different from the piddle-peddle with the women's jobs. Those little tiny things in electronics and it's just kind of boring all the time but this is hard. It's hard work. And you don't have time to think about work. And I like to keep my thoughts busy. And it was all together different. It's an experience.

The women interviewed thus far indicate again and again that challenging work, work that demands something of them physically or mentally, and personal satisfaction are important to them and that nontraditional jobs in particular provide them with these. This final quote from a woman machinist summarizes this general sentiment.

> . . . my first thought was to go into electronics but I decided against it because to me that would have been boring and I am the kind of person, I like to have a challenge, you know, something to keep me interested. Otherwise I do get bored and I don't follow through on

> things unless they're challenging. This has been one of my problems but . . . I'm very . . . excited about the machine shop.

NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND RECOGNITION

Finally distinct from a desire for challenge and personal satisfaction many of the women express high needs for achievement and recognition which they feel might be satisfied through good employment. One respondent stated it this way:

> I wanted my career to be real important to me and to mean something to me emotionally--satisfy a need in me--not just factory work. Making money--I didn't want to just make money. I wanted a career that was important to me, you know what I mean.

Another expressed it this way:

> A high paying job. I would like a job with a position. I mean if I'm going to be in this type of work I'd like to be a supervisor or something. Something that--and I don't have any idea what their pay scale is, or maybe have the opportunity to become an electronics technician. Something so that I know more than they do, I know why it's being done and I know all about it.

A black female apprentice told us:

> I've always wanted to get ahead. All my life I've wanted to do something--like whatever I start, even today, I want to finish it, whether I'm right or wrong. I started the apprentice program and that's another four years I took contract and I don't really like contracts, but I started it and I want to finish it. I signed a contract for four years and joined the Air Force because that's something that I've always wanted to do, so that was four years and my mother and them kept telling me, that's a long time--and after I got in, I wanted to get out. But then I said, well I've got to finish it, because I started it. And I liked the work in physical therapy but, you know, working full time and trying to pick up my credits at night--I'll be 55 before I even get there. But I still want to do that.

In all these instances the women are articulating a concern not only with challenge but with accomplishment, with doing something important. For women whose prior options may have been assembly line work or waitressing to become a foreman or supervisor is defined as a significant accomplishment.

The ability to do, something you previosuly thought you couldn't do or other's believed you weren't capable of is another kind of achievement. An older woman entering a nontraditional blue collar trade after having every kind of job from being a waitress to being a delivery girl for gangsters expressed it this way:

> Like I said, doing it made me feel good about myself, being able to learn it, and even to some degree excel in certain areas of it, made me feel really good and confirmed some things that maybe I only vaguely thought--I always thought that maybe women could do all these things, and I always thought I could, but you have to prove things to yourself sometimes and this helped me prove it. It also told me that--cuz I was the oldest person in the class--it didn't mean a thing, maybe I will live forever, I've been praying for that for years. I also feel stronger. Um . . . or maybe I feel I can use the strength I already had, not just physically, by my inner strength, in another words being able to say I can do it and I've shown I can do it has made a difference in how I react at home, and how I react to people I deal with. It makes me feel different. I'm not as self conscious about myself and things I can do.

Another woman whose children are six and eight and who is being trained for a nontraditional occupation expressed her personal concerns with accomplishment in this way:

> I feel that I'm going to accomplish something instead of just sitting at home and then too it relaxes me in this classroom because I know I'm going to learn something, and then too, I think it's--it's like giving birth, you know, if I didn't have any children, then I'm useless--if I don't work and my children are grown up, I feel useless. This way I feel I'm accomplishing something for myself.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PAID EMPLOYMENT SUMMARIZED

We have taken the time to share these extended passages in the respondents' own language in an effort to share, with as little interpretation as possible, their definitions of their situations vis-a-vis paid employment and why employment is important to them. Clearly, in addition to very concrete economic motives, these women are looking for friendship, challenge, personal satisfaction and independence in their work. Our preliminary findings summarized suggest that the significance of paid employment in the lives of these women can be understood in terms of a cluster of values which would include:

1. Economic concerns articulated along such diverse dimensions as:
   a. Primary contribution to family income
   b. Independence from husband
   c. Possibility of increased earnings
   d. Fair wages
2. Desire to get out and do something
3. Desire for outside communication and friendship
4. Desire for personal satisfaction and challenge; mental and physical
5. Need for achievement and recognition

We asked the respondents numerous questions about other spheres of activity and found that among these women, in both traditional or nontraditional fields, family life and paid employment were their primary realms. Almost none of the women we've interviewed thus far participate in community or school activities, voluntary associations or unions. This is in part because of the demands made on their time by family and employment but the interviews also suggest, as did Komarovsky's research, that the world of the working class woman is in

fact, more circumscribed than that of the middle class woman. Thus, paid employment may be a highly desirable avenue for the expansion of social contacts and sources of personal fulfillment for many women. The elaboration of consumption patterns and social life accompanying middle class and professional life styles often involves middle class women in decorating and gourmet cooking, social clubs and dinner parties, reading and perhaps an interest in crafts or painting, music lessons, ball games and other development oriented activities for children. Many of these activities for the most part, are still alien to the more limited resources and social expectations of significant sectors of minority and working class life. Middle class women may find a kind of personal fulfillment through potting, baking bread, volunteerism or community activism, but the women we've interviewed thus far, do not typically participate in such worlds. Rather, the elaboration of their personal and social selves appears to center around paid employment. For example, we asked respondents to describe what would be the good life for them, and if and how employment would fit into that life. Out of 100 interviews thus far, only three women have indicated they would want to stop working. For the vast majority of these increasingly skilled women in working class jobs, work in addition to providing needed income, is a source of numerous personal rewards and satisfactions. One of the respondents put it this way:

> I would not be happy unless I was working. Mentally happy. The good life for me right now would be to be with the man right now that I care the most about in the world who just happens to be I think, the greatest person in the world--with my children, working, I have to work. I want to

> work to be happy.. I want to be with people and to experience things, to not miss any of my children's neat little things, and I really don't. Oh I might miss them sneezing in a certain way, but I really don't miss anything, cuz I get it all at the end of the day.

SOME IMPLICATIONS

We are reluctant at this early stage in the research to suggest possible implications of our findings. The seriousness of the commitment to paid employment expressed by our respondents contradicts many of the popular stereotypes of these women as aspiring to a more leisurely middle class life style. In addition, the positive feelings towards skilled labor expressed by the women in nontraditional jobs in particular, need to be understood within the larger framework of research and writing on the alienated male blue collar worker. The differences between males and females in these jobs can probably be understood in terms of the socio/historical particularities of the work experience of each sex. At this early stage, however, we are reluctant to take on the possibly profound theoretical implications of what appears to be a significant difference in the feelings men and women have about skilled labor.

Another point which this paper has tried to emphasize is that low income and working class women living in urban society are finding decreasing satisfaction in traditional homemaking roles. Like middle and upper class women, the demands of housework and child rearing have diminished but unlike middle and upper class women, there has not been an equivalent expansion of involvements in child development, volunteer activity, and individual pursuits such as arts and

crafts. It is also true that the economic needs of working class women are real and immediate. Paid employment is thus attractive for a variety of reasons. As our economy moves more and more in the direction of one person's income being inadequate for support of a family, at the same time that the pattern of urban living increasingly dislocates families and isolates women, we can expect to see more and more women looking to paid employment to satisfy economic and personal needs.

I strongly disagree with critics of the women's movement who suggest that it is the "women's movement" ideology that is leading more and more women into paid employment and out of the home. The women we have interviewed have little involvement with or knowledge of the "women's movement." They represent not an ideological cadre but a shifting reality of American life.

The traditional social and economic functions performed by women at home cannot equal the economic value to a family of their paid employment except in upper-middle class families. Even here as Alice Rossi (1965) has pointed out women have found new activities to replace the previously central economic ones because the earning power of the man is sufficient to support exploration and self realization in realms other than paid employment. A large number of women have never enjoyed this luxury and if current urban and economic trends are any indication, fewer and fewer women will be able to afford or, in fact, find personal rewards outside of some kind of paid employment. This in turn means rethinking the entire structure of work and occupations in the United States. Jobs need to be shared and available with full benefits on a part time basis in order that income be shared more equitably. But

they also need to be restructured in order to provide the personal challenge and satisfaction men and women seek in their activities.

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